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## New system helps public safety personnel talk to one another

By IVY HERRON

At 2 p.m. on Tuesday, a turn of a switch enabled local emergency personnel to have better inter-agency communication in times of crises. The new Brazil communications tower site is located at 307 W. Church St.

"This is a milestone event for us," said Sally Fay, Communications Director of the Integrated Public Safety Commission/Project Hoosier SAFE-T. "This is number 63 of 126 communications sites that are being built around Indiana, marking the halfway point in the project."

Project Hoosier SAFE-T (Safety Acting for Everyone - Together) is a statewide wireless public safety communications system that will connect the communication systems of local, state, and federal public safety officials. When seconds count and emergency personnel face the danger of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, crime or medical emergencies, immediate response can mean the difference between rescuing a survivor or retrieving a victim.

Public safety officials need to be able to communicate with each other within towns, cities and counties throughout the state and, at times, across state lines. But very often, this is not the case since most departments use different types of communication systems.

"Indiana's new system is considered a model for other states because we have created a very cost effective system without charging

local user fees, which is not the case for many other states across the country," Fay said.

Reports following Hurricane Katrina rescue efforts showed that a lack of communication between responding agencies severely slowed down relief efforts and impacted the safety and welfare of residents left behind in the path of the storm.

SAFE-T was created to prevent communication problems in Indiana before they could happen on a large scale such as what recently happened in the Gulf Coast area. The new border-to-border system will allow emergency personnel across agencies and jurisdictions to communicate seamlessly and instantly. The wide-berth network will allow almost all local systems, from older VHF to the newest digital systems, to interoperate. Local departments will only need to upgrade radios, consoles and other equipment while the state will maintain the system without charging user fees.

"The system also adds a new security level to radio traffic for emergency personnel that was not available before," Implementation Director Dave Smith told The Brazil Times. "Radio traffic will ultimately be encoded for security purposes." This will make over-the-counter purchased scanners, which are currently available to the public for monitoring emergency band radio traffic, obsolete in the future without the proper security codes to access the new system.



Ivy Herron photo

*Clay County Emergency Management Director Bryan Husband and Chief Deputy Doug Barr discuss the benefits of the new Integrated Public Safety Commission/Project Hoosier SAFE-T communication tower located at 307 W. Church St. with Implementation Director Dave Smith. The project, which consists of 126 communication sites being built around Indiana, is scheduled to be completed in 2006.*